THE BARAKAT GALLERY

Chinese Art

Han Bronze Vessels
Han Glazed Vessels
Han Terracotta Vessels
206 BC - 220 AD

Han Dynasty

The Han Dynasty, like the Zhou before it, is divided into two distinct periods, the Western Han (206 B.C.-9 A.D.) and the Eastern Han (23-220 A.D.) with a brief interlude. Towards the end of the Western period, a series of weak emperors ruled the throne, controlled from behind the scenes by Wang Mang and Huo Guang, both relatives of empresses. They both exerted enormous influence over the government and when the last emperor suddenly passed away, Mang became ruling advisor, seizing this opportunity to declare his own Dynasty, the Xin, or "New." However, another popular uprising began joined by the members of the Liu clan, the family that ruled the Han Dynasty, the Xin came to a quick end and the Eastern Han was established in its place with its capital at Loyang (Chang'an, the capital of the Western Han, was completely destroyed).

However, even as Chinese influence spread across Southeastern Asia into new lands, the Eastern Han Dynasty was unable to recreate the glories of the Western Period. In fact, this period can be characterized by a bitter power struggle amongst a group of five consortial clans. These families sought to control the young, weak emperors with their court influence. Yet, as the emperors became distrustful of the rising power of the clans, they relied upon their eunuchs to defend them, often eliminating entire families at a time. During the Western Han, the Emperor was viewed as the center of the universe. However, this philosophy slowly disintegrated under the weak, vulnerable rulers of the Eastern Han, leading many scholars and officials to abandon the court. Eventually, the power of the Han would completely erode, ending with its dissolution and the beginning of the period known as the "Three Kingdoms."

Han Bronze Vessels

Han Bronze Hu

FZ.349
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 11" (27.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

Three bands of decoration cover the belly of this urn that stands on a flared base and contracts at the neck. The decorative bands that are spaced over the belly of the urn represent shapes of abstracted animals intertwined in a swastika-like design. From the neck, the urn slightly extends outward with half-inch wide decorative band applied just below the ridge of the mouth. Both sides of the shoulder have animal shaped handles with rings attached. Known as taotie, these images of a mystical tiger/dragon/bird creature date back to ancient times as the motif evolved into becoming a standard feature of bronze décor. The taotie pattern assures that the powers of the animal world have been correctly ritualized.

This vessel was most likely used to hold wine in rituals and ceremonies. It is also true that members of high society interred possessions of daily life to accommodate the deceased in his or her underground refuge and accompany the soul on its journey to the other world. - (FZ.349)

Han Bronze Long-Necked Hu

H.023
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
10.5" (26.7cm) high x 6.5" (16.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

The swollen belly and long slender neck of this flask characterizes it as a vessel used to contain liquids. A unique feature is the shape of the mouth which is modelled after the voluptuous contours of a flower. It rests on a small circular base, with traces of incrustation throughout. The virtues of simplicity and subtlety are exhibited through its elegant line and form. The Han Dynasty is known as the cultural blossoming period in Chinese history. Common belief held that if the way of the Sages was restored, then social order and moral uprightness of men could be achieved. Bronze vessels served an important role in the world of rites and ritual as well as in the realm of men who longed for expensive bronze ware to demonstrate their power and prestige. - (H.023)

Han Bronze Fang Hu

H.037
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
13.25" (33.7cm) high x 6.125" (15.6cm) wide

Collection: Chinese
Style: Han Dynasty
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

The angular contours of this vessel distinguish it from other vessels used to hold liquids for ceremonial use. Its large voluminous shape with a protruding belly and tapered neck make it suitable for storage as well. As opposed to the common hu, this vessel comes equipped with a decorative lid mounted with s-shaped images of animals, possibly of a snake or swan. A set of taotie masked handles are attached to two sides of the vessel. Traces of incrustation appear throughout. The Han Dynasty is known as the cultural blossoming period in Chinese history. Common belief held that if the way of the Sages was restored, then social order and moral uprightness of men could be acheived. Bronze vessels served an important role in the world of rites and ritual as well as in the realm of men who longed for expensive bronze ware to demonstrate their power and prestige. - (H.037)

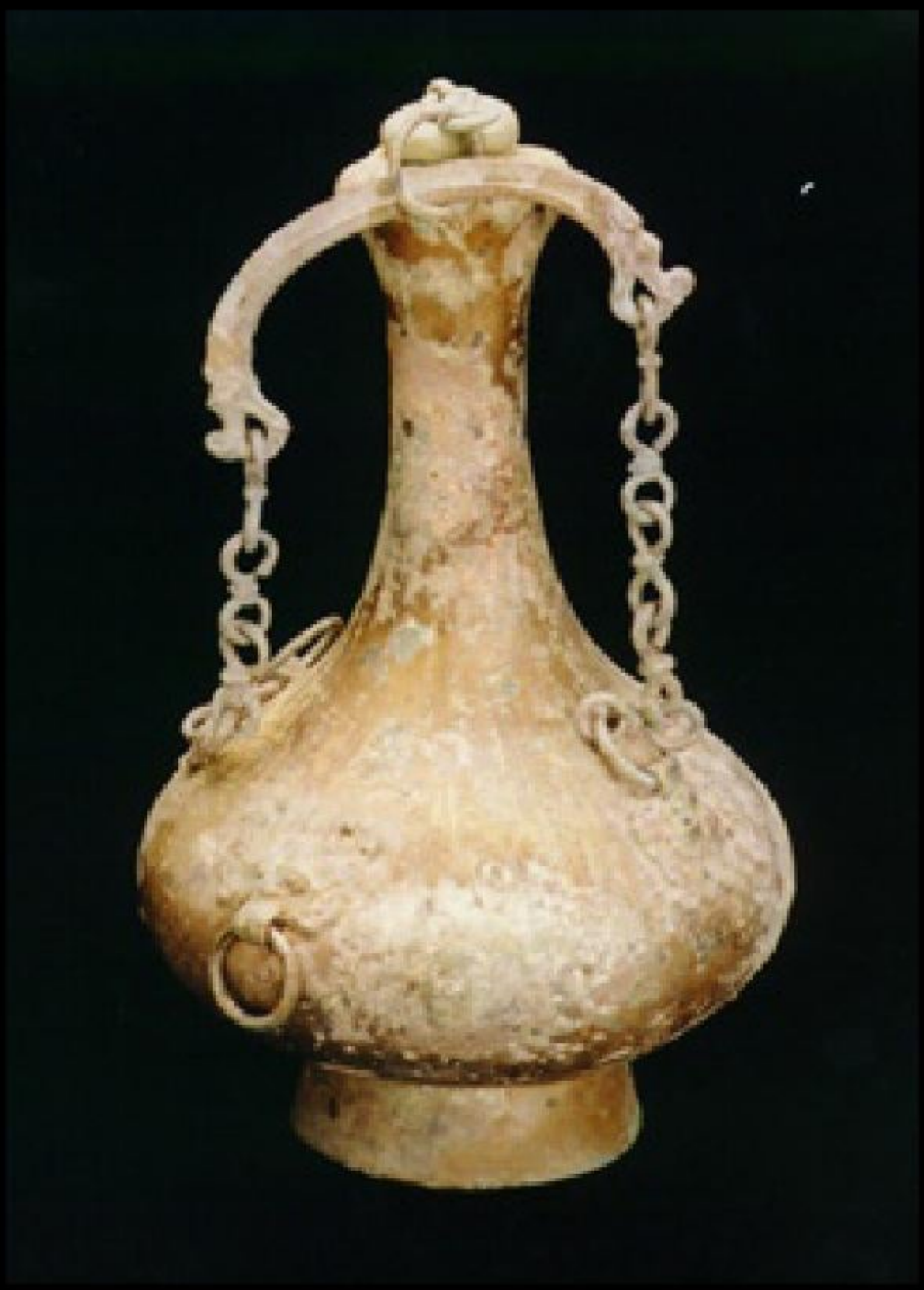
Han Bronze Hu

H.038
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
14.375" (36.5cm) high x 11" (27.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: UAE

This Hu has a pear shaped body which swells at the belly above a flared circular base and contracts at the neck. From the neck, the vessel flares out forming a wide mouth decorated on the side with a plain band. A second band divides the mouth and upper belly, and a third band appears accross the center of the belly below two taotie mask handles. During the Han Dynasty, the tradition of casting bronze vessels for use in ritual ceremonies continued. By this time, the shapes of vessels had become canonized and subject to many stylistic restrictions. However, technological advances had enabled foundries to increase production, making them more accessible to wealthy patrons. This Hu is classified as a wine holding vessel, serving an important role in the indulgent lifestyle of the wealthy and the rites and ritual of the Han. - (H.038)

Han Bronze Wine Vase With Handle



PF.4545
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 12" (30.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

This slender-necked flask is representative of the Han practice of imitating earlier bronze traditions. Combining the styles inherited from the Shang with new technical skills, the Han were able to make an innovative contribution to the tradition of ritual object making. The transformation of the lips into the shape of a blooming flower attests to artisan's commitment to tradition and innovation. The sensual shape of the flask adds to the beauty of this vessel that was used to hold wine in ceremonies and banquets.

A traditional feature of early bronzeware is the two-headed dragon handle. This distinctive handle connects the sides of the vessel with two long chains held in the mouths of a dragon and an upside down Taotie mask. Four large Taotie animal masks are placed on top of the belly in positions representing the Four Directions. The Taotie motif evolved from early bronzeware decor, probably out of the desire to propitiate the forces of the animal world to ensure a bountiful harvest and beneficial happenings. - (PF.4545)

Han Bronze Ding

PF.4769
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
7.75" (19.7cm) high x 8" (20.3cm) wide

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: UAE

Three curved extensions with holes at the bottom protrude from the lid of this very handsome vessel. The handles curve upwards and flatten off at the top. The three legs are broad at the upper portion, becoming narrower and curved in the form of animal legs. A lovely patina gives the entire vessel an iridescent quality, alternating a variety of shades in striking contrasts. Since casting bronze was a difficult and expensive process, much of the bronze objects (apart from weaponry) were made as ritual vessels for ancestor worship used by the ruling elite. Later, they also served as containers for wine for food; symbolizing not only wealth, but also political power. Patronage of the ruling classes gave work to expert artisans, resulting in splendid creations such as this tripod vessel. - (PF.4769)

Han Dynasty Bronze Bowl

FZ.398
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
3.5" (8.9cm) high x 7" (17.8cm) wide

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

The period from 206 B.C. to 220 A.D. is known as the Han Dynasty. Under the Han rulers, science and technology made remarkable strides; paper, the compass, and the seismograph were invented; and steel was manufactured. The empire expanded into southern China, northern Vietnam and parts of Korea, and forged trade routes through Central Asia to India and Persia. Confucianism was reinterpreted and adopted as the official state ideology, and a national university was established for the training of Confucian officials. The political unity of the Qin was preserved, but sanctioned by Confucianism so that Chinese of today still look back on this epoch with pride and call themselves "men of Han." Diversity developed within the culture: native and foreign, Confucian and Taoist, courtly and popular.

A beautiful blue/green patina attests to the age of this vessel. The elegant shape of the body reveals the expert metalwork of the Han artists. The flaring lip of the vessel and the two circular handles complement the forms of the oval body. This bowl may have been used for ritual offering in ancestor worship ceremonies. Perhaps, it functioned secularly for dispensing sauces or rice at Imperial banquets. Considering the rarity and value of bronze during the Han era, this vessel was clearly a prized possession reserved for the Imperial elite or their close intimates. This ancient treasure has only become more splendid and more precious with age. - (FZ.398)

Han Long-Necked Bronze Hu

H.692
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Style: Han Dynasty
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

This long-necked bronze hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Such a vessel would have functioned as a container of sumptuous wines. This refined hu is essentially unadorned, save for a protruding ring along the neck of the vessel. However, this ring is more functional than decorative, serving as a grip to lift the vessel and pour out its precious contents. Most notable is the distinctive garlic-shaped mouth. Originally, a lid would have capped this hu; however, it has long since vanished. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of alternating green and burgundy hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel. Such a work, forged from bronze, would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the Han Dynasty social hierarchy. Quite simply, only a court nobility of wealthy merchants could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.692)

Han Bronze Fang Hu

H.813
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
16.25" (41.3cm) high x 8.25" (21.0cm) depth

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: UAE

This bronze fang hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Such a vessel would have functioned as a ritual container for the storage and transportation of sumptuous wines. This refined fang hu is essentially unadorned, save for two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles that have been attached to the swelling body. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation demonstrates, as well as the incised patterns, the influence of previous styles such as the Zhou Dynasty. A lid caps this fang hu, embellished with four abstract "handles" that appear to be highly stylized birds. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of green hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel. Such a work, forged from bronze, would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the social hierarchy. Quite simply, only a court nobility of wealthy merchants could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have served as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.813)

Han Bronze Hu

H.814
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 7.5" (19.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art
Medium: Bronze
Location: UAE

This diminutive bronze hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Such a vessel would have functioned as a container for the storage and transport of sumptuous wines. A band in low relief decorates the surface of the exterior along the join of the shoulder and the neck. This band complements the lower half of the body that is raised slightly when compared to the neck and middle. As well, two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles have been attached to the shoulder of the hu. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation demonstrates the influence of previous styles on the art of the Han, including the Zhou Dynasty. A lid caps this hu, embellished with a stylized foliate motif rendered in low relief. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of alternating green and rusty brown hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel. Such a work, forged from bronze, would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the Han Dynasty social hierarchy. Quite simply, only a court nobility of wealthy merchants could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.814)

Han Bronze Fang Hu

H.818
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 12.25" (31.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

This bronze fang hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Such a vessel would have functioned as a ritual container for the storage and transportation of sumptuous wines. This refined fang hu is essentially unadorned, save for two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles that have been attached to the swelling body. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation demonstrates, as well as the incised decorative patterns that adorn them, the influence of previous styles such as the Zhou Dynasty. A lid caps this fang hu, embellished with four abstract “s”-shaped projections that appear to be highly stylized birds. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of green hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel. Such a work, forged from bronze, would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the social hierarchy. Quite simply, only a court nobility of wealthy merchants could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have served as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this fang hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.818)

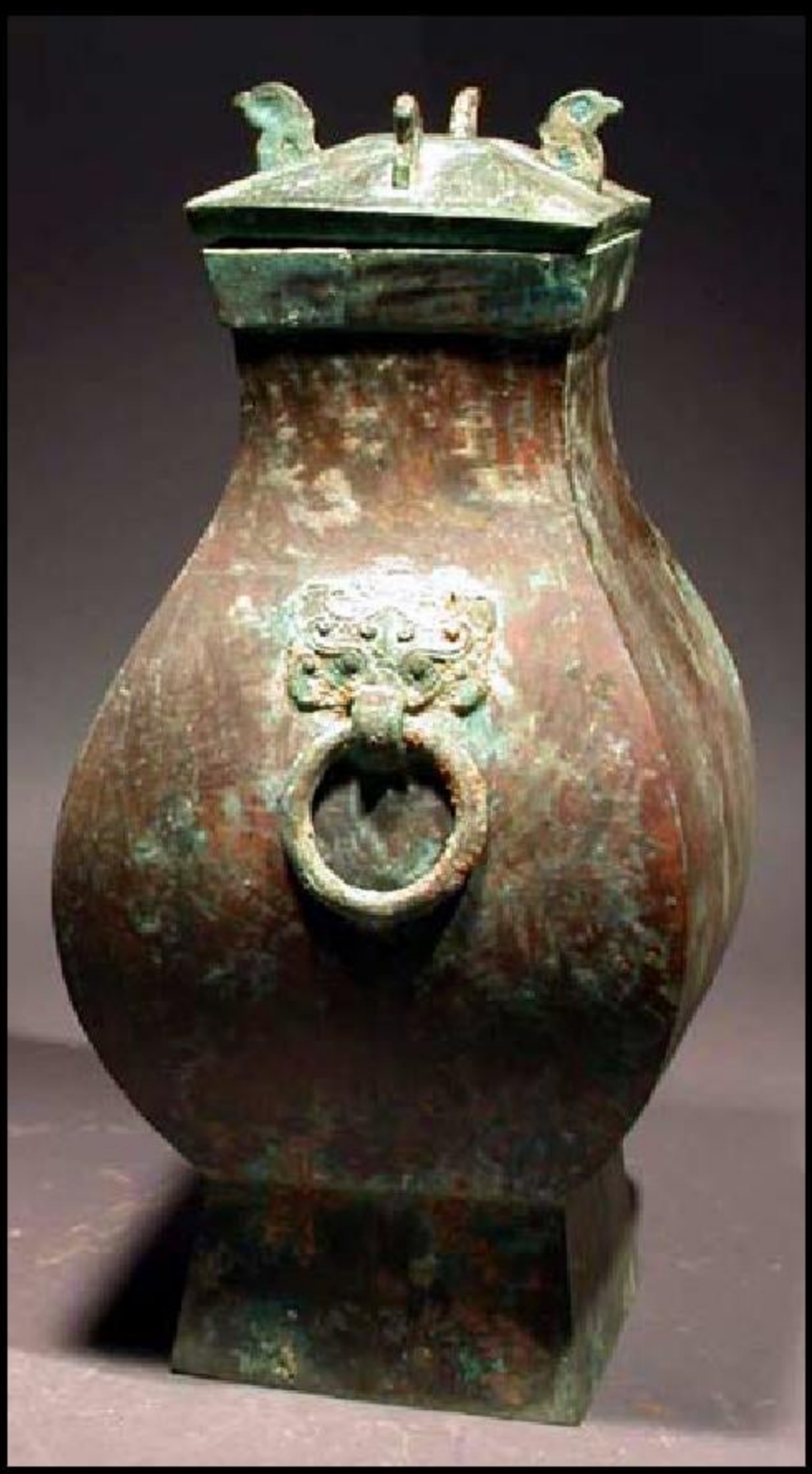
Han Bronze Fang Hu

H.854
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

This square-shaped bronze fang fang hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Such a vessel would have functioned as a ritual container for the storage and transportation of sumptuous wines. This refined fang hu is essentially unadorned, save for two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles that have been attached to the swelling body. These stylized animal heads represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation, as well as the incised patterns, demonstrates the influence of previous works such as the bronzes of the Zhou Dynasty. A lid caps this fang hu, embellished with four abstract "handles" that appear to be highly stylized bird heads. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of alternating turquoise and brown hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel. Such a work, forged from bronze, would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the social hierarchy. Quite simply, only court nobility or wealthy merchants could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this fang hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.854)

Han Bronze Fang Hu



H.855
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

This square-shaped bronze fang hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Such a vessel would have functioned as a ritual container for the storage and transportation of sumptuous wines. This refined fang hu is essentially unadorned, save for two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles that have been attached to the swelling body of the hu. These stylized animal heads represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation, as well as the incised patterns, demonstrates the influence of previous works such as the bronzes of the Zhou Dynasty. A lid caps this fang hu, embellished with four abstract "handles" that appear to be highly stylized bird heads. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of alternating turquoise and brown hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel. Such a work, forged from bronze, would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the social hierarchy. Quite simply, only court nobility or wealthy merchants could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this fang hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H. 855)

Han Hu with Handle and Lid

H.861
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 15" (38.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: UAE

This slender bronze hu would have once functioned as a container of sumptuous wines two thousand years ago. This refined hu is remarkable for the handle and lid that survive intact, attached to the body by chains. The chains, in turn, are connected to two small Tao Tieh mask handles. These stylized animal heads represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. The lid has also been adorned with a stylized floral motif rendered in low relief. These abstracted representations demonstrate the influence of previous styles, such as the Zhou Dynasty, on the art of the Han. A series of ringed handles also hang from the lower half of the body, just above the rim. However, these handles were likely purely decorative; although it is possible that a rope could have been wound between them to assist in the transportation of the precious wines contained within. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of alternating green and burgundy hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to the work. Forged from bronze, this hu would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the Han Dynasty social hierarchy. Quite simply, only a court nobility of wealthy merchants could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next - (H.861)

Han Long-Necked Bronze Hu

H.862
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 13.25" (33.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

This long-necked bronze hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Such a vessel would have functioned as a container of sumptuous wines. This refined hu is essentially unadorned, save for two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles that have been attached to the shoulder of the swollen belly. These stylized animal heads represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation demonstrates the influence of previous styles, such as the Zhou Dynasty, on the art of the Han. Originally, a lid would have capped this hu; however, it has long since vanished. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of alternating green and burgundy hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to the work. Forged from bronze, this hu would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the Han Dynasty social hierarchy. Quite simply, only a court nobility of wealthy merchants could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next - (H.862)

Han Bronze Bowl and Spoon

H.863
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
2.875" (7.3cm) high x 6.25" (15.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

Han Bronze Bowl and Spoon

H.864
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
3" (7.6cm) high x 6.25" (15.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

Under the wise rulers of the Han Dynasty, science and technology made remarkable strides; paper, the compass, and the seismograph were invented; and steel was manufactured. The empire expanded into southern China, northern Vietnam and parts of Korea, and forged trade routes through Central Asia to India and Persia. Confucianism was reinterpreted and adopted as the official state ideology, and a national university was established for the training of Confucian officials. The political unity of the Qin was preserved, but sanctioned by Confucianism so that Chinese of today still look back on this epoch with pride and call themselves "men of Han." Diversity developed within the culture: native and foreign, Confucian and Taoist, courtly and popular.

A gorgeous green patina encrusted to the surface of the bronze attests to the age of this vessel. The elegant shape of the body reveals the metalwork mastery of Han smiths. The defined lip of the vessel and the two circular handles complement the forms of the oval body. This bowl may have been used for ritual offering in ancestor worship ceremonies. Perhaps, it functioned secularly for dispensing sauces or rice at Imperial banquets. A little bronze spoon is included, and surely would have used to politely serve the sauce or rice that once filled the bowl. Interestingly, spoons in China still retail the same general shape as this example. Considering the rarity and value of bronze during the Han era, this vessel was clearly a prized possession reserved for the Imperial elite or their close intimates. This ancient treasure has only become more splendid and more precious with age. - (H.863) - (H.864)

Han Bronze Fang Hu

PF.5490
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 6.875" (17.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

This square-shaped bronze fang hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Such a vessel would have functioned as a ritual container for the storage and transportation of sumptuous wines. This refined fang hu is essentially unadorned, featuring only two small handles that decorate the sides. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of alternating turquoise and brown hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel. Such a work, forged from bronze, would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the social hierarchy. Quite simply, only court nobility or wealthy merchants could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (PF. 5490)

Han Bronze Fang Hu

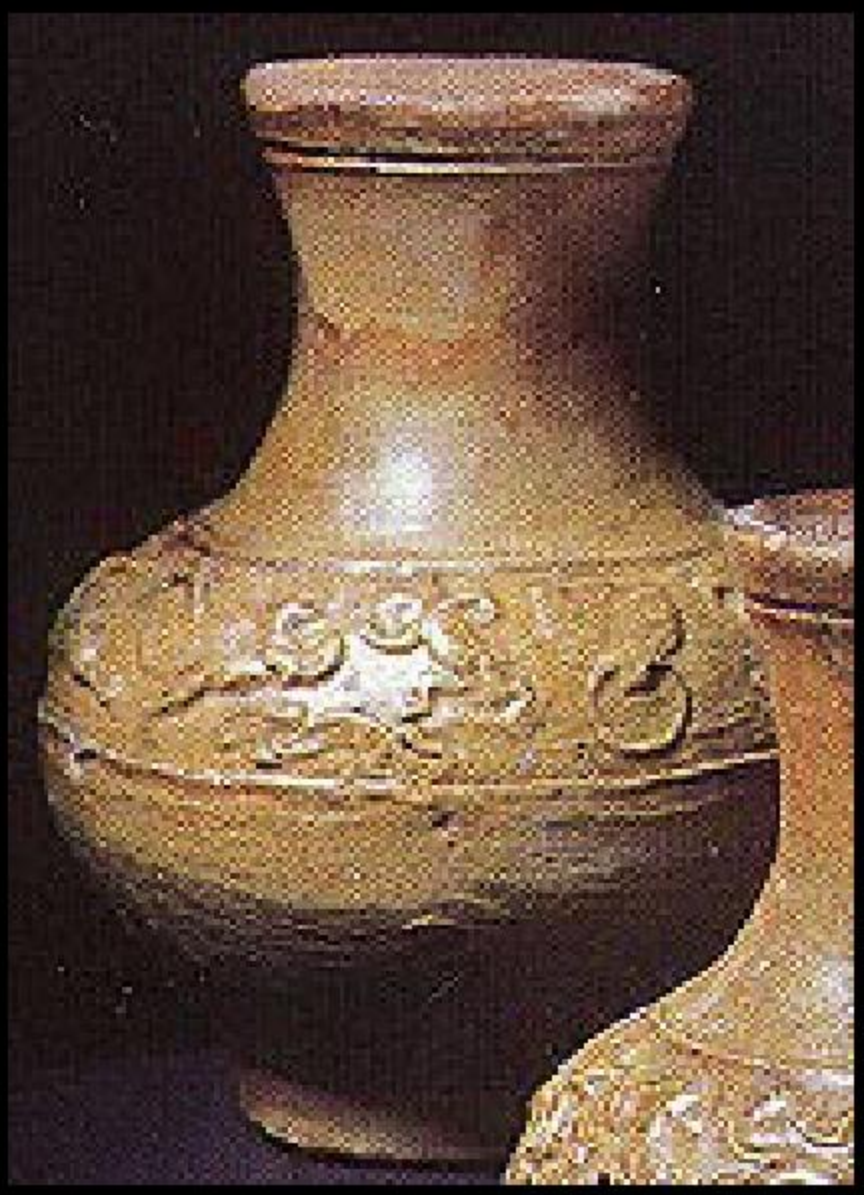
H.857
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 15.25" (38.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

The angular contours of this vessel distinguish it from other vessels used to hold liquids for ceremonial use. Its large voluminous shape with a protruding belly and tapered neck make it suitable for storage as well. As opposed to the common hu, this vessel comes equipped with a decorative lid mounted with highly stylized “s”-shaped images of animals, possibly of a snake or swan. This refined fang hu is essentially unadorned, save for two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles that have been attached to the swelling body. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation demonstrates, as well as the incised patterns, the influence of previous styles such as the Zhou Dynasty. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of green hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel. The Han Dynasty is known as the cultural blossoming period in Chinese history. Common belief held that if the way of the Sages was restored, then social order and moral uprightness of men could be achieved. Bronze vessels served an important role in the world of rites and ritual as well as in the realm of men who longed for expensive bronze ware to demonstrate their power and prestige. Although this vessel would have served as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this fang hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.857)

Han Glazed Vessels

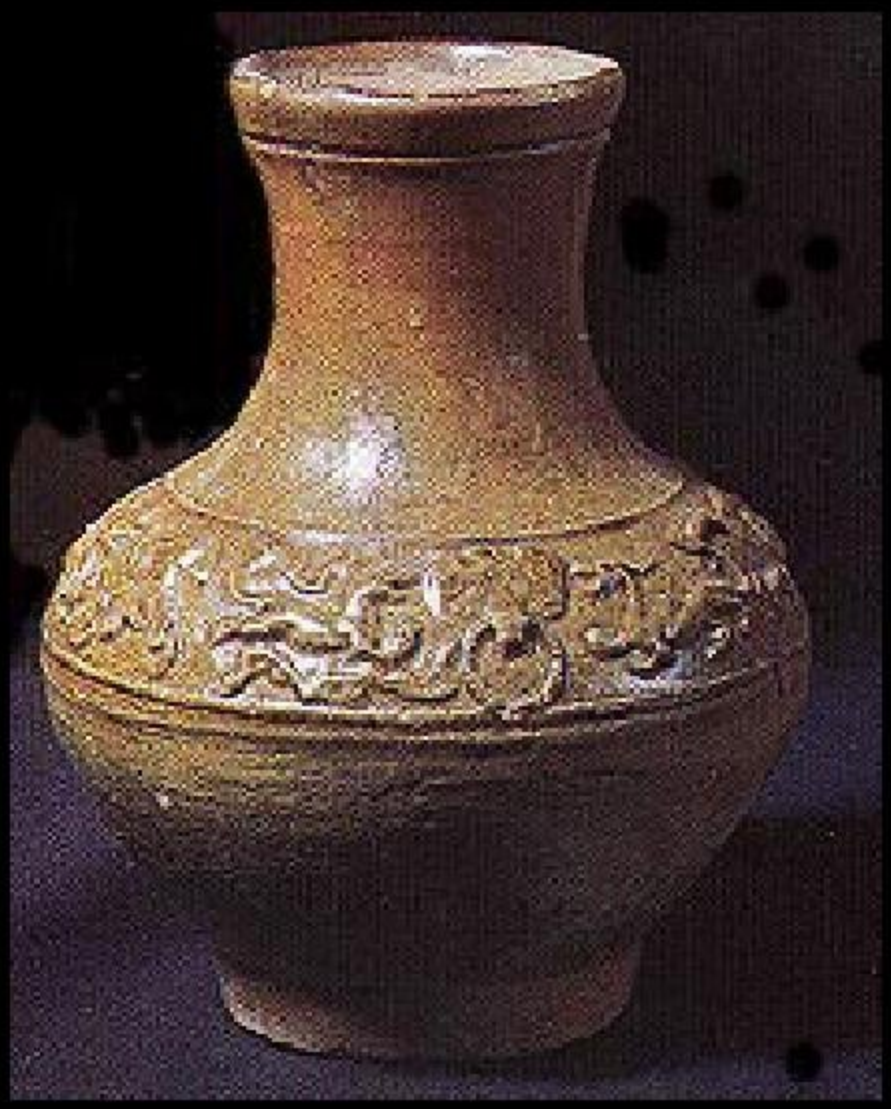
Eastern Han Small Glazed Hu



H.513
Origin: China
Circa: 25 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 7" (17.8cm) high

Catalogue: V17
Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Eastern Han Small Glazed Hu



H.514
Origin: China
Circa: 25 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 7" (17.8cm) high

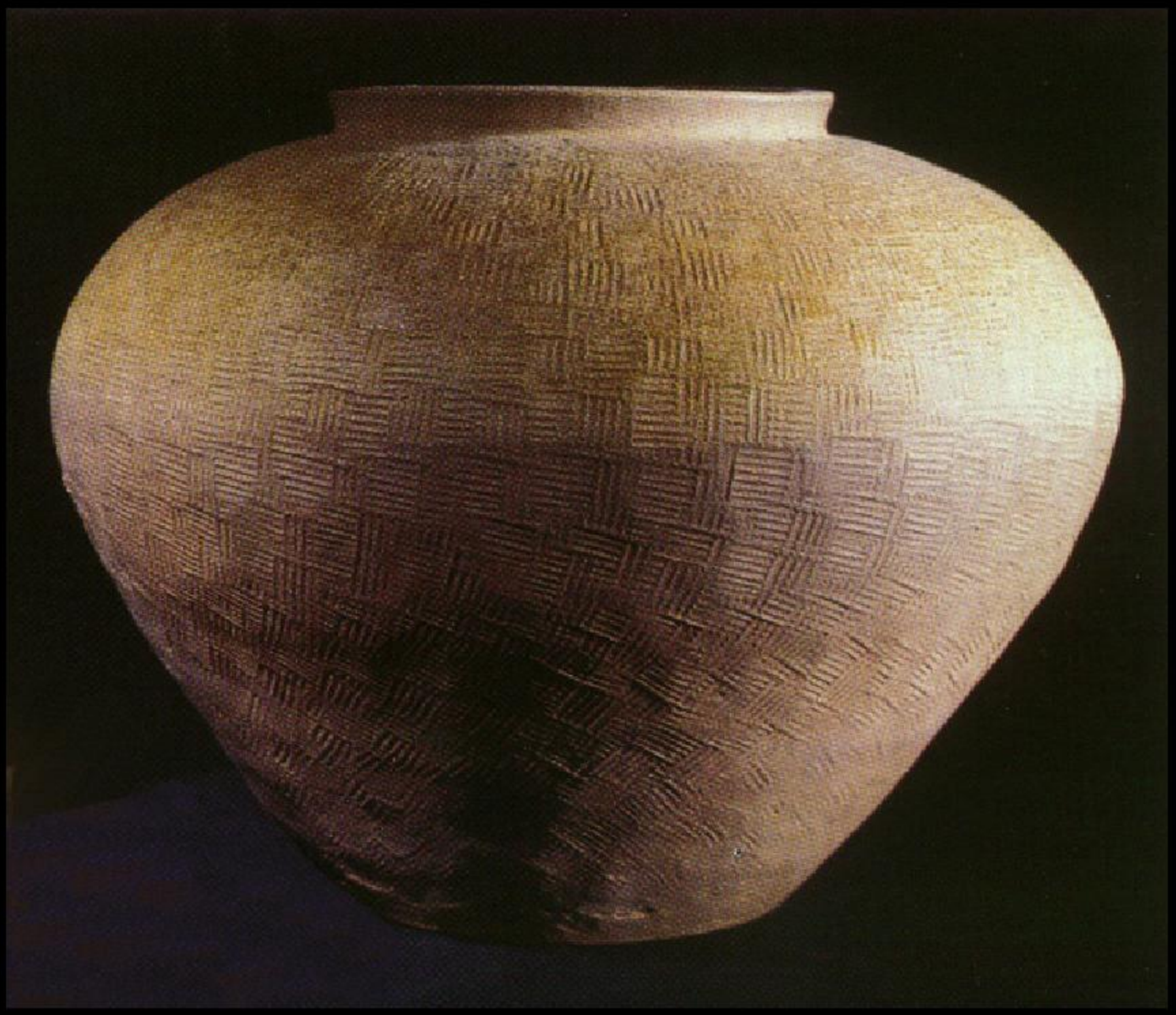
Catalogue: V17
Collection: Chinese
Style: Eastern Han Dynasty
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

The Han Dynasty was a key period of major importance in the development of Chinese ceramics, for among other innovations, glazed wares were advanced to a new level of sophistication. Primarily, glazed wares took the form of aristocratic vessels made in imitation of bronzes whose decorative values far outweighed their practical significance. However, ceramic vessels entered more and more largely into everyday life and took the form of practical vessels for everyday use.

Given its clear and shiny glaze, this brownish-green glazed pottery ewer is crafted in the style of the Eastern Han Dynasty. In a modified version of a cocoon-shaped flask Hu, this vessel has a horizontally oval-shaped belly with animal patterns on its upper side, a slightly flared rim at the mouth, and a tapered base. Taotie mask designs adorn both sides of the vessels as a scene of dragons moving across clouds is depicted around its body.

This vessel is representative of the trend in Eastern Han ceramics to express the joy that people of the time took in their way of life, as well as their concern for life itself. - (H.513) - (H.514)

Han Glazed Terracotta Vase



H.515
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
11.25" (28.6cm) high x 13.25" (33.7cm) wide

Catalogue: V17
Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: Great Britain

As the technology of ceramic production increased significantly with the development of kilns and low-temperature lead-glaze ware during the Han Dynasty, the nature of ceramic work became more geared toward practical uses and large scale production. Covered with a fine mat impression, this vessel exemplifies the beauty of minimalist decoration common among practical forms of pottery. The shape of this particular vessel, found also among early glazed ware vessels of the Shang Dynasty, had been perfected by the peak of the Han Dynasty. Its symmetrical balance and fluid curvature attests to advanced techniques and better workmanship. A widened belly dramatizes its appearance as its short-rimmed neck adds to the exaggeration. Though made for practical purposes, it hasn't abandoned the artistic standards of taste; rather it has rose to achieve a middle ground between utility and beauty. The ceramic artisan of the Han Dynasty is accredited for revolutionizing China's ceramic industry, paving the way for the development of fine porcelain in later days. - (H.515)

Eastern Han Brown-Glazed Terracotta Hu

H.601
Origin: China
Circa: 25 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 6.25" (15.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Green and brown glaze vessels of the Han Dynasty are generally based on bronze predecessors but feature distinctive variations that are quite pleasing. This small dark brown-glazed hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Three parallel bands rendered in low relief decorate the surface of the exterior at the join of the neck and the shoulder. The mouth is emphasized with a gently flaring rim that projects slightly from the neck. The gorgeous dark brown glaze differentiates this vessel from similar works in bronze, which are otherwise identical in shape and form. Over the ages, the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina. Commonly referred to as "silver frost," this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.601)

Eastern Han Ochre-Glazed Terracotta Hu

H.603
Origin: China
Circa: 25 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 5.25" (13.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Style: Eastern Han Dynasty
Medium: Glazed-Terracotta
Location: United States

Green and brown glaze vessels of the Han Dynasty are generally based on bronze predecessors but feature distinctive variations that are quite pleasing. This small ochre-glazed hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Incised bands the surface of the exterior at the join of the neck and the shoulder and at the widest swelling of the body. The mouth is emphasized with a gently flaring rim that projects slightly from the neck. The gorgeous ochre glaze differentiates this vessel from similar works in bronze, which are otherwise identical in shape and form. The diversity of colors is perhaps the foremost advantage of terracotta works compared to their bronze counterparts. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.603)

Eastern Han Green-Glazed Terracotta Ding

H.604
Origin: China
Circa: 25 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 14" (35.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Green and brown glaze vessels of the Han Dynasty are generally based on bronze predecessors but feature distinctive variations that are quite pleasing. This green-glazed ding is notable for its elegant decorations. The lid is embellished with a central roundel featuring two overlapping fish. This design is framed by a band adorned with a swirling geometric abstract pattern rendered in low relief while a serrated motif marks the outer edge of the lid. The presence of the fish no doubt relates to the function of this vessel. Dings were originally crafted in bronze and used to cook foods, hung over the fire by its high handles. However, the function would evolve from the preparation of foods to the presentation and serving of meals at festival rites and ceremonies. This ding rests on three legs molded to imitate horse hooves. The gorgeous green glaze recalls similar works in bronze, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages. Commonly referred to as “silver frost,” this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although this vessel would have functioned as an elegant presentation for a dish in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for feasting and celebrating, this ding would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.604)

Eastern Han Green-Glazed Terracotta Lien

H.605
Origin: China
Circa: 25 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 8.5" (21.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Lidded food containers of this type are known as liens. This lively green-glazed lien is notable for its elegant decorations. The lightly stepped lid is decorated with a swirling abstract design on the tiered panels while the edge features a serrated pattern. The container stands raised on three charming feet molded in the shapes of bears carrying the vessel. The side of the body is embellished with two bands of parallel incised lines. Two purely decorative Tao Tieh mask handles, depicting mythological Dragons, intersect the middle band. These Tao Tieh masks relate to similar bronze examples where the handles are actually functional. The gorgeous green glaze recalls such bronze works, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages, most noticeable along the bands and handles. Commonly referred to as “silver frost,” this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although this vessel would have functioned as a food storage container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. Such a work might have originally been buried containing food inside, to be consumed by the deceased in the afterlife. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for eating and feasting, this lien would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.605)

Eastern Han Green-Glazed Terracotta Lien

H.606
Origin: China
Circa: 25 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 9.5" (24.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Lidded food containers of this type are known as liens. This lively green-glazed lien is notable for its elegant decorations. The fabulously molded lid takes on the form of the Sacred Mountain, featuring various animals and mythological creatures climbing towards its jagged peak. The container stands raised on three charming feet molded in the shapes of bears carrying the vessel on their backs. The side of the body is embellished with a panel in low relief depicting a mythological hunting scene. Here, the combination of swirling terrain, undulating tree, and rampant beasts recall the motifs of the lid. The gorgeous green glaze recalls similar works in bronze, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages. Commonly referred to as “silver frost,” this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although this vessel would have functioned as a food storage container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. Such a work might have originally been buried containing food inside, to be consumed by the deceased in the afterlife. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for eating and feasting, this lien would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.606)

Eastern Han Green-Glazed Terracotta Lien

H.607
Origin: China
Circa: 25 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 10" (25.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Lidded food containers of this type are known as liens. This lively green-glazed lien is notable for its elegant decorations. The fabulously molded lid takes on the form of the Sacred Mountain, featuring various animals and mythological creatures climbing towards its jagged peaks. The container stands raised on three charming feet molded in the shapes of bears carrying the vessel on their backs. The side of the body is embellished with a panel in low relief abstract motifs. Two purely decorative Tao Tieh mask handles, depicting mythological Dragons, adorn the sides of the body. These Tao Tieh masks relate to similar bronze examples where the handles are actually functional. The gorgeous green glaze recalls such bronze works, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages, most noticeable on the mountain lid. Commonly referred to as "silver frost," this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although this vessel would have functioned as a food storage container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. Such a work might have originally been buried containing food inside, to be consumed by the deceased in the afterlife. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for eating and feasting, this lien would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.607)

Eastern Han Green-Glazed Terracotta Hu

H.609
Origin: China
Circa: 25 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 10.5" (26.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Green and brown glaze vessels of the Han Dynasty are generally based on bronze predecessors but feature distinctive variations that are quite pleasing. This green-glazed hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Two incised bands decorate the surface of the exterior at the join of the neck and the shoulder and at the widest swelling of the body. These bands serve to divide the vessels into segments that create a nice visual flow to the piece. The mouth is emphasized with a gently flaring rim that protrudes from the neck. At the swelling of the body, two purely decorative Tao Tieh mask handles intersect the bands. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. The gorgeous green glaze recalls similar works in bronze, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages, most noticeable along the lower body and the bottom of the base. Commonly referred to as "silver frost," this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.609)

Eastern Han Green-Glazed Terracotta Hu

H.610
Origin: China
Circa: 25 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 14" (35.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Style: Eastern Han Dynasty
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Green and brown glaze vessels of the Han Dynasty are generally based on bronze predecessors but feature distinctive variations that are quite pleasing. This large green-glazed hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Three parallel bands rendered in low relief decorate the surface of the exterior at the join of the neck and the shoulder and at the widest swelling of the body. These bands serve to divide the vessels into segments that create a nice visual flow to the piece. The mouth is emphasized with a gently flaring rim featuring two similar bands at the join of the neck. At the swelling of the body, two purely decorative Tao Tieh mask handles intersect the bands. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology.

The gorgeous green glaze recalls similar works in bronze, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages. Commonly referred to as “silver frost,” this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.610)

Eastern Han Green-Glazed Terracotta Lien

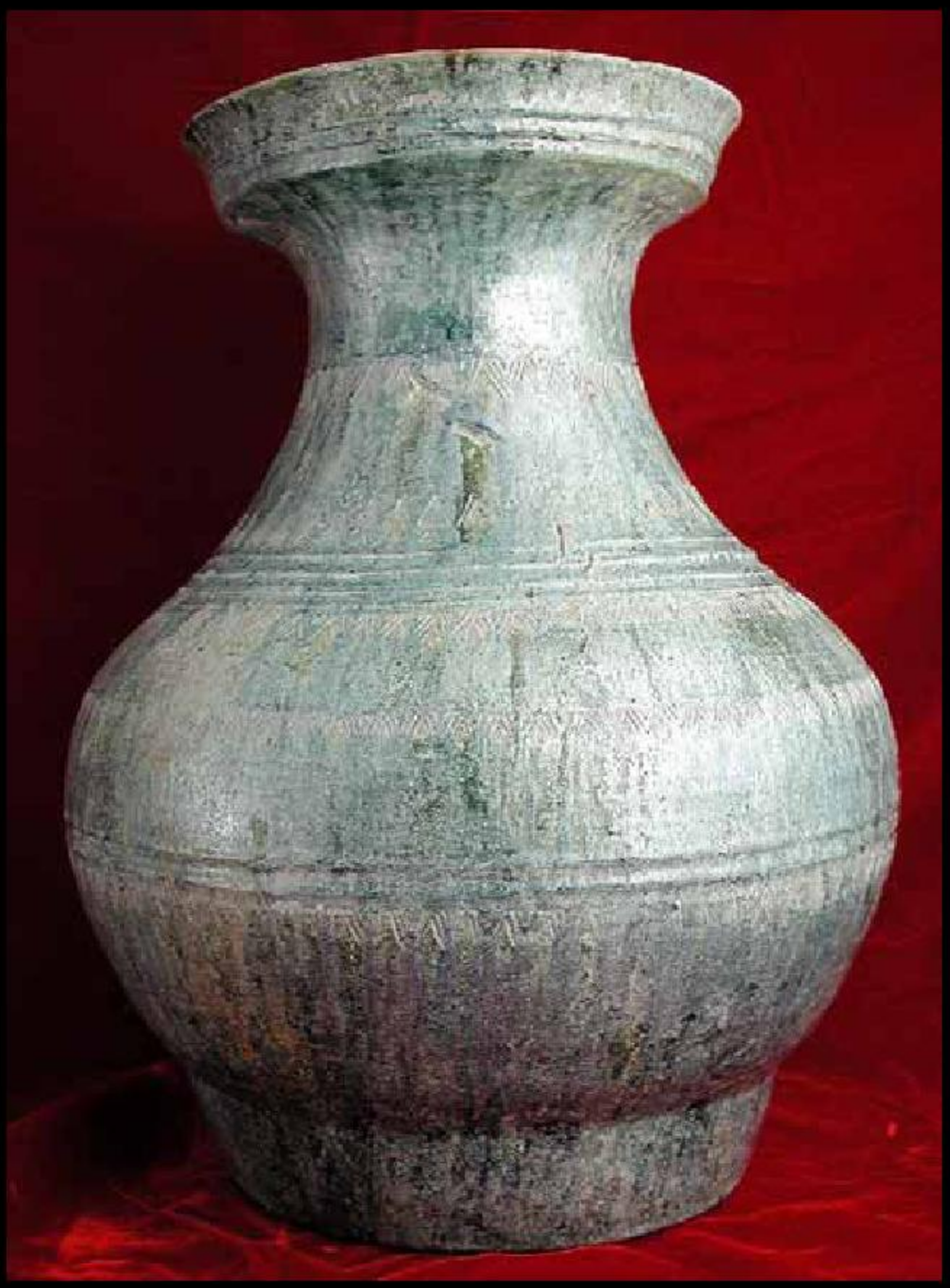
H.611
Origin: China
Circa: 25 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 12.25" (31.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Lidded food containers of this type are known as liens. This lively green-glazed lien is notable for its elegant simplicity. Three sets of five parallel bands rendered in very low relief decorate the surface of the body. These bands serve to divide the vessels into segments that create a pleasing visual flow to the piece. The vessel stands raised on three charming feet molded in the shape of bears holding up the piece. The wide rim imitates a typical tile roof that would have covered the estates of the wealthy elite and features a detachable lid. The gorgeous green glaze recalls similar works in bronze, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages. Commonly referred to as “silver frost,” this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens.

A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although this vessel would have functioned as a food storage container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. Such a work might have originally been buried containing food inside, to be consumed by the deceased in the afterlife. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for eating and feasting, this lien would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.611)

Eastern Han Frosted Green-Glazed Terracotta Hu



H.811
Origin: China
Circa: 23 AD to 220 AD
Dimensions: 13.75" (34.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Green and brown glaze vessels of the Han Dynasty are generally based on bronze predecessors but feature distinctive variations that are quite pleasing. This hu is notable for its striking surface appearance. The gorgeous green glaze recalls similar works in bronze, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages that almost gives off a bluish hue. Commonly referred to as “silver frost,” this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolved the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl.

Groups of parallel bands decorate the surface of the exterior on the rim, at the join of the neck and the shoulder and just below the widest swelling of the body. These bands serve to divide the vessels into segments that creates a nice visual flow to the piece. Zigzag lines weave along the body, creating a rhythmic pattern that plays against the straight bands. The mouth is emphasized with a gently flaring rim, offsetting the low base upon which the vessel rests. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.811)

Han Green-Glazed Hu

H.812
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 16.5" (41.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Green and brown glaze vessels of the Han Dynasty are generally based on bronze predecessors but feature distinctive variations that are quite pleasing. This green-glazed hu is notable for its elegant simplicity. Three parallel bands rendered in low relief decorate the surface of the exterior at the join of the neck and the shoulder. These bands serve to divide the vessels into segments that create a nice visual flow to the piece. Two purely decorative Tao Tieh mask handles intersect these bands. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. The gorgeous green glaze recalls similar works in bronze, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages. Commonly referred to as “silver frost,” this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H. 812)

Han Green-Glazed Lien

H.827
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 11.75" (29.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Style: Han Dynasty
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Lidded food containers of this type are known as liens. This lively green-glazed lien is notable for its elegant decorations. The fabulously molded lid takes on the form of the Sacred Mountain, featuring various animals and mythological creatures climbing towards its jagged peak. The container stands raised on three charming feet molded in the shapes of bears carrying the vessel on their backs. The side of the body is embellished with a panel in low relief depicting a mythological hunting scene. Here, the combination of swirling terrain, undulating tree, and rampant beasts recall the motifs of the lid. The gorgeous green glaze recalls similar works in bronze, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages. Commonly referred to as “silver frost,” this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although this vessel would have functioned as a food storage container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. Such a work might have originally been buried containing food inside, to be consumed by the deceased in the afterlife. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for eating and feasting, this lien would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.827)

Han Green-Glazed Lien

H.828
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 10" (25.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Lidded food containers of this type are known as liens. This lively green-glazed lien is notable for its elegant decorations. The fabulously molded lid takes on the form of the Sacred Mountain, featuring various animals and mythological creatures climbing towards its jagged peaks. The container stands raised on three charming feet molded in the shapes of bears carrying the vessel on their backs. The side of the body is embellished with a panel in low relief natural motifs reiterating the Sacred Mountain. Here, tigers and bears are seen frolicking through the countryside. Two purely decorative Tao Tieh mask handles, depicting mythological Dragons, are also visible on the side of the body. These Tao Tieh masks relate to similar bronze examples where the handles are actually functional. The gorgeous green glaze recalls such bronze works. Although this vessel would have functioned as a food storage container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. Such a work might have originally been buried containing food inside, to be consumed by the deceased in the afterlife. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for eating and feasting, this lien would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.828)

Han Green-Glazed Lien

H.830
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 7" (17.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Style: Han Dynasty
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Lidded food containers of this type are known as liens. This lively green-glazed lien is notable for its elegant simplicity. Two sets of three parallel bands rendered in very low relief decorate the surface of the body. These bands serve to divide the vessels into segments that create a pleasing visual flow to the piece. The vessel stands raised on three charming feet molded in the shape of bears holding up the piece. The lien features a detachable lid decorated with a floral motif and featuring some early Chinese characters around the pedals. The gorgeous green glaze recalls similar works in bronze, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages. Commonly referred to as "silver frost," this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although this vessel would have functioned as a food storage container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. Such a work might have originally been buried containing food inside, to be consumed by the deceased in the afterlife. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for eating and feasting, this lien would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.830)

Lead-Glazed Jar with Dish-shaped Mouth

LA.523
Origin: China
Circa: 100 BC to 8 AD
Dimensions: 13.25" (33.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Terracotta
Location: Great Britain

Reddish earthenware globular body with a plain band around the shoulder and green lead glaze throughout.Similar in shape to a bronze hu (to which it owes its shape), these lead glazed ceramic versions emerged in Shaanxi during the second century BCE. They were executed in diverse shapes, the most luxurious examples having moulded low-relief friezes. The two animal masks with rings (pushou xianhuan) here serving as decorative handles, reflect the style of contemporary door-knockers.

Examples of this type of globular jar with flat bottom have been found in late Western Han tombs in Shaanxi and Henan. Although a number of scholars have proposed that lead-flux glazes ultimately could have derived from the West, their emergence was probably encouraged by Chinese Daoist practice. In fact, Daoist alchemists in their search for immortality had since the Eastern Zhou period developed formulas involving the use of smelted lead, which were believed to produce elixirs able to transform the body if swallowed. The result of melting lead with sand and clay during the preparation of these immortality-granting potions was likely to have been noticed by the potters, who eventually adapted the process for glazing.

For comparable examples see: Kaogu 1982.3: 226; Kaogu xuebao 1991.2: 245-6; - (LA.523)

Lead-Glazed Terracotta Jar

LO.617
Origin: China
Circa: 100 BC to 8 AD

Collection: Chinese
Style: Western Han Lead-glazed ware
Medium: buff earthenware
Location: Great Britain

Buff earthenware with moulded decoration and straw-coloured lead glaze.

Similar in shape to contemporary bronze Hu vases , lead glazed ceramic versions emerged in Shaanxi during the second century BCE, mostly to replace their metal prototype in tomb furnishings (mingqi). They were executed in diverse shapes, the most luxurious examples having moulded low-relief friezes.

The two animal masks with rings (pushou xianhuan) here serving as decorative handles, reflect the style of contemporary door-knockers.

The scene with various creatures could be interpreted as either a royal hunt or a depiction of the legendary Immortals land. In both cases a customary auspicious scene found on various media, from gilded boshanlu censers to lacquer and textiles.

Examples of this type of globular jar with flat bottom have been found in late Western Han tombs in Shaanxi and Henan, confirming the purpose of this type of ceramic ware.

Although a number of scholars have proposed that lead-flux glazes ultimately derived from the West, their emergence was probably encouraged by Chinese Daoist practice. In fact, Daoist alchemists in their search for immortality had since the Eastern Zhou period developed formulas involving the use of smelt lead which were believed to produce elixirs able to transform the body if swallowed.

The result of melting lead with sand and clay during the preparation of these immortality-granting potions were likely to have been noticed by the potters, who eventually adapted the process for glazing.

For comparable examples see:

Kaogu 1982.3: 226

Kaogu xuebao 1991r.2: 245-6 - (LO.617)

Han Green-Glazed Lien

CK.0302
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
9" (22.9cm) high x 7.8" (19.8cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: UAE

Lidded food containers of this type are known as liens. This lively green-glazed lien is notable for its elegant decorations. The fabulously molded lid takes on the form of the Sacred Mountain, featuring various animals and mythological creatures climbing towards its jagged peaks. The container stands raised on three charming feet molded in the shapes of bears carrying the vessel on their backs. The side of the body is embellished with a panel in low relief natural motifs reiterating the Sacred Mountain. Here, tigers and bears are seen frolicking through the countryside. Two purely decorative Tao Tieh mask handles, depicting mythological Dragons, are also visible on the side of the body. These Tao Tieh masks relate to similar bronze examples where the handles are actually functional. The gorgeous green glaze recalls such bronze works. Although this vessel would have functioned as a food storage container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. Such a work might have originally been buried containing food inside, to be consumed by the deceased in the afterlife. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for eating and feasting, this lien would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (CK.0302)

Han Terracotta Vessels

The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own Dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called mingqi, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subject, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthy existence. Thus, quite logically, the things we require to sustain and nurture our bodies in this life would be just as necessary in our next life.

Western Han Painted Terracotta Hu

H.621
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD
Dimensions: 13.75" (34.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

The extensive polychrome painting that decorates the body and the lid of this vessel, depicting charming foliate and geometric motifs, is quite rare. Seldom do more than traces of pigments survive in tact. Here, designs rendered in red, light blue, and white are easily discerned against the dull gray hue of the fired terracotta. This wine vessel was found interred alongside a deceased nobility or elite member of the Han social hierarchy. During the Han Dynasty, it was believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, if we require food and drink to nourish our bodies on earth, we require the same to nourish our souls in the next world. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.621)

Western Han Painted Terracotta Hu

H.622
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD
Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

The extensive polychrome painting that decorates the body and the lid of this vessel, depicting charming foliate and geometric motifs, is quite rare. Seldom do more than traces of pigments survive in tact. Here, designs rendered in red, violet, and white are easily discerned against the dull gray hue of the fired terracotta. This wine vessel was found interred alongside a deceased nobility or elite member of the Han social hierarchy. During the Han Dynasty, it was believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, if we require food and drink to nourish our bodies on earth, we require the same to nourish our souls in the next world. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.622)

Western Han Painted Terracotta Hu

H.623
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD
Dimensions: 14" (35.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

The extensive polychrome painting that decorates the body and the lid of this vessel, depicting charming foliate and geometric motifs, is quite rare. Seldom do more than traces of pigments survive in tact. Here, designs rendered in red, blue, and white are easily discerned against the dull gray hue of the fired terracotta. This wine vessel was found interred alongside a deceased nobility or elite member of the Han social hierarchy. During the Han Dynasty, it was believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, if we require food and drink to nourish our bodies on earth, we require the same to nourish our souls in the next world. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.623)

Western Han Painted Terracotta Food Storage Vessel

H.625
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD
Dimensions: 8" (20.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

Western Han Painted Terracotta Food Storage Vessel

H.626
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD
Dimensions: 7.75" (19.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

The extensive polychrome painting that decorates the body of this vessel, depicting swirling foliate and abstract motifs, is quite rare. Seldom do more than traces of pigments survive in tact. Here, designs rendered in red and white are easily discerned against the dull gray hue of the fired terracotta. Bands highlight the low neck, accentuating the join of the neck and body. This food storage container was found interred alongside a deceased nobility or elite member of the Han social hierarchy. During the Han Dynasty, it was believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, if we require food and drink to nourish our bodies on earth, we require the same to nourish our souls in the next world. Although these vessels remain empty today, they once held grains or other substances meant for consumption in the afterlife. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for ceremonial feasting and celebrations, this container would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.625) - (H.626)

Western Han Tripartite Painted Terracotta Yan

H.627
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD
Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

This three-part steamer (alternately known as a Yan or Xian) was discovered buried alongside an important member of the Han Dynasty social hierarchy. The raised tripod vessel at the bottom would have been placed atop a fire as water boiled inside. The steam would rise upwards through the grated opening of the middle vessel, where it would cook the contents housed inside the upper two portions. The top piece served to trap the steam inside and thus quicken the cooking process. No doubt modern culinary techniques have altered little from this centuries old device. However, this work is not remarkable so much for the sophisticated culinary culture of the Han, as much as for the beauty and sophistication of the design. Rarely does the amount of unfired pigment that grazed this Yan survive the ravages of time and the stresses of excavation.

Wonderful red and white highlights give an elegance to the otherwise dull gray surface. Swirling foliate patterns cover the sides of the upper parts while the tiered elevations of the tripod are embellished with alternating red and white bands. Such a glorious utensil surely would have been a treasured possession. However, this Yan was not interred with its owner as a sign of wealth. Instead, this steamer was expected to continue cooking meals in the afterlife. The Han believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, it seems logical to reason that as we require food to nourish our bodies on earth, we will require food to nourish our souls in the afterlife. This Yan was created to steam eternally, ushering the deceased into the next world. The bountiful feast that this Yan symbolizes continues throughout eternity. Today, we marvel at this work both for its historical and cultural significance as well for its overwhelming beauty. - (H.627)

Han Thirty-Five Piece Painted Terracotta Dining Set

H.655
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD
Dimensions: 8.25" (21.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Terracotta
Additional Information: Measurments are Taken From the Largest Container
Location: United States

This extensive variety of this stunning collection is equaled only by its rarity. A splendid example of mingqi, literally translated as: “items for the next world,” this dining set was specifically commissioned for use in the afterlife. During the Han era, the ancient Chinese believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, as we require wood and drink to nourish our bodies while on earth, we would require the same to nourish our souls throughout eternity. This unrivaled collection attest both to the wealth of their deceased owner as well as the familial piety of his ancestors who commissioned the many works. With such an extensive set, surely the soul of the deceased would be well provided for.

While similar collections have been discovered, rendered in a variety of media, this set is unique both for the breadth of forms and for the uniformity of medium and style. Featuring food and wine vessels, bowls, dishes, plate, and serving ladles, this set still retains most of its original bright red pigment, making the set that much more astounding. Some of the bowls are adorned with marvelously detailed handles in the form of dragon heads. Gorgeous Tao Tieh masks, depicting stylized dragon heads holding handles in their mouths, decorate the side of a large bowl. This set presents us with a magical picture of the sophisticated culinary and ceremonial traditions of ancient China. However, furthermore, this collection symbolizes the spiritual and philosophical beliefs of the Han Dynasty. Overall, this set is a testament to the enormous cultural wealth, history, and heritage of China. - (H.655)

Western Han Painted Terracotta Hu

H.624
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD
Dimensions: 14" (35.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Style: Western Han Dynasty
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

The extensive polychrome painting that decorates the body and the lid of this vessel, depicting charming foliate and geometric motifs, is quite rare. Seldom do more than traces of pigments survive in tact. Here, designs rendered in red, blue, violet, and white are easily discerned against the dull gray hue of the fired terracotta. This wine vessel was found interred alongside a deceased nobility or elite member of the Han social hierarchy. During the Han Dynasty, it was believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, if we require food and drink to nourish our bodies on earth, we require the same to nourish our souls in the next world. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.624)

Han Terracotta Vessel in the Form of a Stag

H.1035
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 9" (22.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Terracotta
Location: United States

This vessel, covered in remnants of white paint that may have originally served as a base coat for additional colors that have since faded away, has taken the form of a recumbent stag. The large, hollow oval body serves as the container. The outstretched legs rest on the ground and stabilize the vessel, keeping it from rolling over on itself. A stag head emerges from the front end. However, the face does not particularly evoke the image of a stag; instead, the facial features are more related to Han era equine sculptures. It is the undulating, spiky antlers that emerge from the top of the head that identify the creature as a stag. Otherwise, an opening projects from the top of the animal's back. Precious liquids like wine or water would have been poured into the vessel through this opening. On the back end, a truncated tail functions as a spout. We can imagine servants presenting this vessel to guests at an elegant dinner party for nobles and court officials: as the containers was tipped, wine would have gently poured forth from the tail; a truly charming way to serve refreshments. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty. - (H.1035)

Han Terracotta Vessel in the Form of a Ram

H.1034
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions: 8.25" (21.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Terracotta
Location: United States

This vessel, covered in remnants of white paint that may have originally served as a base coat for additional colors that have since faded away, has taken the form of a recumbent ram. The large, hollow oval body serves as the container. The outstretched legs rest on the ground and stabilize the vessel, keeping it from rolling over on itself. A ram head emerges from the front end. However, the face does not particularly evoke the image of a ram; instead, the facial features are more related to Han era equine sculptures. It is the arching horns that rise out of the top of the head that identify the creature as a ram. Otherwise, an opening projects from the top of the animal's back. Precious liquids like wine or water would have been poured into the vessel through this opening. On the back end, a truncated tail functions as a spout. We can imagine servants presenting this vessel to guests at an elegant dinner party for nobles and court officials: as the containers was tipped, wine would have gently poured forth from the tail; a truly charming way to serve refreshments. Today, this vessel is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H. 1034)

Western Han Painted Terracotta Fang Hu

H.644
Origin: China
Circa: 150 BC
Dimensions: 15.5" (39.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

The term “Fang” is a prefix used to describe a squared-off or faceted variation of a normally rounded form, in this case the Hu wine storage vessel. The extensive polychrome painting that decorates the sides and the lid of this vessel, depicting charming avian and geometric motifs, is quite rare. Seldom do more than traces of pigments survive in tact. The beautifully Tao Tieh masks, depicting stylized dragons holding handles in their mouths, are noteworthy for their fine relief details and painted highlights. This wine vessel was found interred alongside a deceased nobility or elite member of the Han social hierarchy. During the Han Dynasty, it was believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, if we require food and drink to nourish our bodies on earth, we require the same to nourish our souls in the next world. The wine once contained within this Fang Hu has vanished, perhaps consumed during the celestial feasts of the afterlife. While this vessel represents the sophisticated artistic and culinary traditions of the Han, it also symbolizes their religious and philosophical beliefs. This Hu once contained wine to nourish the spirit of the deceased eternally. Today, the vessel itself nourishes our eyes with timeless beauty and fills our minds withhistorical and cultural insight. - (H.644)

Pair of Han Duck Vessels

LSO.51
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
13" (33.0cm) high x 9" (22.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art
Style: Polychrome
Medium: Terracotta
Location: Great Britain

These highly unusual vessels are funerary containers, that were interred with a deceased person of considerable social standing in order to aid their passage into the hereafter. The Han period is known for extensive sociopolitical change followed by stability, leading to the foundations of what is now recognised to be "Chinese Culture". The Han era also saw one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on a par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere more apparent than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called "mingqi", literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subject, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. These vessels are sinuously and elegantly designed, incorporating the neck and head of ducks into the spouts and handles, running into globular, rounded vessel bodies. While their function is equivocal, their form suggests that they might have been used as serving vessels for liquids, although it is more probable that they were made specifically for burial with the deceased. This would also explain their extremely good colour preservation. The floral and geometric designs are painted directly onto the body and neck/spout, and are arranged in bands that highlight the vessel's shape. The ducks' anatomical feaures are highlighted with contrasting dark and light paint - providing feathers and facial features - in addition to some further incised decoration around the head area. A highly unusual and desirable pair of vessels, which would be a credit to any collection. - (LSO.51)

Han Ceramic Vessel

DE.023
Origin: China
Circa: 200 BC to 100 BC
Dimensions:
12" (30.5cm) high x 6.5" (16.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art
Medium: Ceramic
Location: United States

”Lifan” Terracotta Amphora with Bronze, Silver and Gilt Appliqué

DJ.1035
Origin: Lifan, Sichuan Province, China
Circa: 3rd Century BC to 2nd Century BC
Dimensions: 7.5" (19.1cm) high x
7" (17.8cm) wide x 7" (17.8cm) depth

Collection: Asian Art
Medium: Terracotta, Bronze
Location: United States

This style of very rare black earthenware amphorae was produced from the Warring States period and throughout the Han Dynasty. The reign of the Han Dynasty is commonly considered within China to be one of the greatest periods in its entire history. As a result, the members of the ethnic majority of Chinese people to this day still call themselves "People of Han," in honor of the Liu family and the dynasty they created. An alternative term Chinese people often use is the term "Descendants of the Dragon" as a sign of ethnic identity. During the Han Dynasty, China officially became a Confucian state and prospered domestically: agriculture, handicrafts and commerce flourished, and the population reached 50 million. Meanwhile, the empire extended its political and cultural influence over Vietnam, Central Asia, Mongolia, and Korea before it finally collapsed under a combination of domestic and external pressures.

In his work regarding these wares, Krahl states that amphorae of this distinct type are characteristic products of Western Sichuan province where they were made by non-Chinese peoples. Hence, this type of vessel is known as Lifan, named after the area of Sichuan province in the far west of China in which such jars have been found.

The everted mouth opens elliptically as if it were two human lips opening to receive liquid refreshment in large quantity. The corners of the mouth form two pointed spouts opposite one another from which the liquid contents might have been poured out. This angular shape follows from the corners of the mouth down the elegantly curved and tapered, almost almond shaped neck of the vessel. The neck itself is decorated with three rows of short vertical engraved lines that encircle the neck in the form of a shapely chocker. On either side, the angular neck fades into the large round belly of the jar toward the middle where it meets one of a number of very unusual polychrome appliqué metal bosses or studs that decorate the curved features of the body and the handles of the vessel in a symmetrical fashion; giving the impression of eyes and other zoomorphic features to the jug and bringing it all the more to life in the eye of the beholder. These studs would have burst forth from the bright and shiny black burnished body in a pyrotechnic display of color. It is clear that each of these studs would have had a different color whether bronze, blue, red, silver or gilt.

The zoomorphic imagery of this beautiful and exotic creature has been enhanced by the potter who has engraved four symmetrically placed large deeply molded spirals that form two exaggerated crescent swirls on each side of the vessel from whichever direction we choose to view from. Might these be the eyes or perhaps arms or even wings?

The vessel has two strong broad smoothly arched handles that emanate from either side of the jar's elliptical mouth and flow down to join themselves seamlessly to either side of the lower center of the vessel's body (at 90 degree angles towards the tapering neck). Toward the top of each arm there remains a bronze stud one of these still has blue decorative pigment traces the other a thick red-brown pigment. Each of the arms also has markings that indicate where two more such studs would have been superficially fixed and have now come off with wear and time, but without damaging the earthenware itself in any way. The base of the jig is recessed creating a relatively shallow foot ring.

It is noteworthy that many stylistic similarities occur between these Lifan and much earlier periods and cultures such as the Neolithic cultures of Machang (circa 3000-2000 B.C.) and Xindian (circa 1500 B.C.). Similar blackware food containers with two handles have also been unearthed in Dena County, Yunan, an area that was the home of the Southwestern Yi tribe during the spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC). The surface of the vessel has then been shaped with tools and then burnished. This process of manufacture gives the jar its beautiful rugged, yet carefully detailed distinctive characteristics. As most apparent from the inside of the mouth and neck of the jar, the surface of the amphora was originally highly burnished to give a shiny black sheen. The surface of the body is an amalgamation of complex curves and convex and concave shapes. These characteristics, in addition to the unusual presence of symmetrically attached bronze bosses on the sides and handles, make this piece extraordinary and particularly rare.

Comparable Literature: S.J. Vainker, Chinese Pottery and Porcelain from Prehistory to Present, New York, George Braziller, Inc., 1991.

Oriental Ceramics. The World's Great Collections, 1974, Vol.5, no.1

Krahl, Chinese Ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection, 1994, Vol.1, no.65.

Yuegutang, A Collection of Chinese Ceramics in Berlin (Regina Krahl, G+H Verlag Berlin,2000) Item 35 Page 55. - (DJ.1035)

Large Han Painted Terracotta Vessel

TF.016
Origin: China
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD
Dimensions:
16" (40.6cm) high x 17" (43.2cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art
Medium: Terracotta
Location: Great Britain

Terracotta Vessel

TF.018
Origin: China
Circa: 100 BC to 100 AD
Dimensions:
12" (30.5cm) high x 11" (27.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art
Medium: Terracotta
Location: Great Britain

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